

P-21: Retailer Education Blitz

Venue: Community

Goal: Preventing Initiation of Tobacco Use

Sponsoring Organization: American Lung Association of Washington - Yakima

Abstract: Youth in Yakima report slightly greater ease of access to tobacco products than youth statewide, and retailer non-compliance for Yakima has been consistently higher than the state average. The American Lung Association of Washington (ALAW) designed and conducted a “Retailer Education Blitz” in Yakima County to inform retailers and the public about youth access laws. Information was sent to all 322 licensed tobacco retailers in the county. Adult and teen volunteers visited 72 tobacco retailers close to schools and handed out materials explaining access laws, required signage and a colorful poster stating “This store protects children’s health, we do not sell cigarettes to minors”. The ALAW purchased radio time to inform the public about youth access laws and encouraged citizens to speak out when they saw tobacco being sold to minors. Following the “Blitz”, most of the visited retailers were compliance checked. Only 5% of retailers involved in the “Blitz” sold to minors, in comparison to 25% who sold to minors during 2001 Synar compliance checks.

Recommendations: Send out initial information packets at the beginning of the year or prior to the project launch. This ensures that tobacco retailers are aware that compliance checks will be done and provides them an opportunity to educate themselves and their employees.

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